

The Last Hoisan Poets & Del Sol Quartet

Echoes from Angel Island

天使島



NATIONAL ANGEL ISLAND DAY 2023

Saturday, January 21, 2023, 12:30pm to 1:30pm
Koret Auditorium, de Young Museum
Golden Gate Park, San Francisco

de Young \
museum

NATIONAL ANGEL ISLAND DAY 2023 @ THE DE YOUNG MUSEUM

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WELCOME

Ed Tepporn, Executive Director, Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation

SEASCAPE / ISLAND

Who Leaves Home? by Genny Lim

Angel Island Poem: *The Seascape*

read by Nellie Wong & Victor Yan, with Del Sol Quartet

Song of Farewell by Nellie Wong

MotherTongue by Genny Lim

Gell Ngnoy Yee: Call Me Auntie by Flo Oy Wong

WHEN WE BADE FAREWELL / PAPER MEMORIES

Angel Island Poem: *When We Bade Farewell*

read by Flo Oy Wong & Victor Yan, with Del Sol Quartet

Wooden Fish Song: A Mother's Lament by Genny Lim

Two Sisters: Voices for Ma Ma by Flo Oy Wong & Nellie Wong

BENEATH CLAY & EARTH / THE THLON DOY

Angel Island Poem: *Beneath Clay & Earth*

read by Genny Lim & Victor Yan,, with Del Sol Quartet

My Baba's Voice Walking through the Rooms by Flo Oy Wong

Getting to Work by Nellie Wong

Portsmouth Square by Genny Lim

FUTURE HISTORIES: HAW MEONG SUEY

Haw Meong Suey by The Last Hoisan Poets,
with Del Sol Quartet

The Journey by Genny Lim



Dear Friends,

On behalf of the entire board and staff of the Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation (AIISF), we would like to thank you for attending today's event. We want to express our deep appreciation to the Del Sol Quartet, the Last Hoisan Poets, the Future Histories Lab at UC Berkeley, and especially the DeYoung Museum for their partnership.

From 1910 to 1940, over 500,000 immigrants from 80 different countries around the world were processed or detained at the former US Immigration Station at Angel Island. The majority were individuals from China, Japan, and other Asian and Pacific countries due to the nation's exclusionary immigration policies.

The site is now recognized as a California Historical Landmark and a National Historic Landmark. This year marks the 40th anniversary of when AIISHAC became AIISF. Over the past 4 decades, numerous generations of board members, volunteers, staff, donors, and other key partners have helped to restore and reimagine the site. These efforts resulted in President Obama's proclamation of Angel Island Day on January 20, 2010, as well as other recognitions and awards.

I hope that today's evocative program inspires you to come out to Angel Island to visit the Detention Barracks Museum and the Angel Island Immigration Museum (which opened in 2022). And I ask that you share what you learn about Angel Island's history with friends and family.

At AIISF, we believe that the buildings, history, and the stories of those who were detained on Angel Island can inspire a more equitable and inclusive future; one that embodies how immigrants makes nations better.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "E. Tepporn".

Edward Tepporn
Executive Director
AIISF

NATIONAL ANGEL ISLAND DAY 2023 @ THE DE YOUNG MUSEUM

Echoes from Angel Island 天使島



Dedication to HIM MARK LAI & JUDY YUNG

We want to dedicate this program to all the former immigrants who passed through Angel Island and to **Him Mark Lai** and **Judy Yung**, my co-authors of *Island: Poetry and History of Angel Island*.

The historic discovery of the poems on the barrack walls of the detention building were discovered in 1970 by Park Ranger **Alexander Weiss**, who alerted his professor at SF State, **Dr. George Araki**.

The story was reported in *East West News*, a bilingual Chinese English journal, which sparked our attention and curiosity to find out more about the barracks. It was **Him Mark Lai**, aka The Dean of Chinese American History, a lay historian and engineer at Bechtel, **Judy Yung**, who was the first librarian of the Asian Community Library in Oakland, and myself, a poet and broadcast journalist at the time, who decided to collect the Chinese poems on the walls and translate them into English for East West.

The poems were collected and published in *Island*, along with oral histories of former detainees, hearing interpreters and inspectors in 1980. Our book helped to bring public awareness of Angel Island's immigration history and the importance of its preservation, which resulted in its acquisition of National Historic Landmark status, thanks to dedicated efforts of members of **Chinese Historical Society of America**, **Chinese Culture Center of San Francisco**, **Kearny Street Workshop**, and many community activists.

We thank the **de Young Museum** and the Public Programs and Education Department for recognizing **National Angel Island Day** by opening their doors and hearts to us in supporting today's special program.

Genny Lim, January 21, 2023

Who Leaves Home?

Who leaves home?
Who leaves behind
All that one loves?
Everything dear to one?
Are immigrants made? Or born?
Like migrating geese we come
To seek a better life.
To escape war and poverty.
To carve from the wind
A vision of a new life
A new world where the promise
Of a future can fulfill the mirage
Of freedom and belonging.
Who can say that the wind
Does not belong to the sky?
Who can say that the land beneath
Our feet is not ours to keep?
Who can say that the air we breathe
Is not our right to breathe?
From time immemorial, people have
Journeyed to follow the seasons,
To seek greener pastures like the
Sheep that graze on summer grasses.

When there is war, we migrate.
When there is no work, we migrate.
When there is little to eat, we migrate.
We, who love our homeland.
We, who must leave family
And everything behind.
Are immigrants made or born?
Who can say that the wind
Does not belong to the sky?
Who can say that the land beneath
Our feet is not ours to keep?
Who can say that the air we breathe
Is not our right to breathe?

Genny Lim

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Poem written for Lenora Lee Dance's
Dreams of Flight, at the Angel Island
Immigration Station, 2019.



Angel Island Immigration Station. 1976. Photo by Crystal Huie. Courtesy of Genny Lim.

THE SEASCAPE

The seascape resembles lichen twisting and turning for a thousand li.
There is shore to land, and it is difficult to walk.
With a gentle breeze I arrived at the city thinking all would be so.
At ease, how was one to know he was to live in a wooden building?

水景如苔千里曲，
陸路無涯路步難。
平風到埠心如是，
安樂誰知住木樓。

This poem inspired movement II of Huang Ruo's *Angel Island: Oratorio*, a musical composition commissioned by the Del Sol Quartet, which premiered in 2021 on Angel Island. English translations of immigrant poems from Angel Island, used with permission from *Island: Poetry and History of Chinese Immigrants on Angel Island, 1910-1940*.

SONG OF FAREWELL

Why are you leaving
after all these many years?
Whose feet will I wash now?
Whose toenails will I trim?

Without you to share my soup
how many pigs' feet do I buy?
Will I smell the aroma of star anise
and will those cow brains really make me smart?

Will someone serve you
peony tea, lotus bean cake
to satisfy your sweet tooth
during the Festival of the Harvest Moon?

Who will make your bed each day?
Who will sing your favorite wedding song?
And who will accompany you to Gold Mountain
and watch you dance, playful
as a baby girl?

Nellie Wong

"Song of Farewell" is installed in a plaque on an F-line Muni platform on the Embarcadero roadway as part of the Waterfront Program, chosen by the San Francisco Arts Commission, San Francisco, California, 1996.

MOTHERTONGUE

Koy! Here. *Nien.* There.

Language is the boat that delivers
memory back and forth, across
heaving seasons, steady and strong
like the hands that coaxed childbirth

Duck eggs preserved in mud with
rich yolks orange as permission
Village remedies for nightsweats
nightmares, fainting and flatulence
among a cabal of sewing women

The Mothertongue that shamed me
now archived like Yaqui in
annotated bibliography with
footnotes and diacritics for
dialects of extinctions that
the Keepers of Tongues
copyright for publication

Koy! Here. *Nien.* There or year.
No English spoken here.
The accent's gotta swing like
the tail of the ox pulling its cart
along the muddy river delta

We were curios, countryfolk
who followed the crooked path
to a yoked dream called *Mei Kuo*
Like Ishi, frozen in time
they say we never really left China
I find her *thlay-yip* voice wet on my tongue

its thick, rough drawl tasting of *ji-yuk beng*
the tip alights on my upper palate
ascending and descending like a gull
in a cave with its wings clipped
I wait and wait in the echoing gloom
of post-mortem interrogations
nervous as the crow flies
A rice bin, a Temple well, recalled
A paper memory tossed at sea
This is all she's left me

The children were laid to rest
behind locked doors with graffiti
etched in couplets of despair
The night moon parsed its golden light
on the words, "I will cross the barrier."

What is your name?
Where and when were you born?
How many houses in row?
Koy! Here. Nien. There.

Mother watches like a sparrow in a nest
under the fading eye of the moon
She dreams of fireflies under the bridge
Of capturing their flickering light
She dreams of wolves and seals
swimming swift and steady across
the frozen channel to survive

Genny Lim

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Suitcase in the Detention Barracks Museum on Angel Island. 2018. Photo by Andi Wong.

GELL NGNOY YEE: CALL ME AUNTIE

On Angel Island near the open road
A distance from *Ai Fow*, San Francisco,
The ocean billows.
I think of you, my *Gim Sahn** husband
Our daughters and I have traveled
A long way to be with you.
We are latched behind barbed wire,
Soldiers with guns here.
Second daughter . . . shivers.
She asks . . . what she has done wrong?
What do I tell her?
I worry . . .
Will we answer the questions correctly?
In *Fah Kee Gwok*,** America, I am your sister,
Not your wife.
"Shhh!"
I warn our daughters,
"*Maw Gong, Maw Gong*,
Don't tell, don't tell.
Secret.
Maw hom ngnoy doo Mama.
Do not call me Mother.
Gell ngnoy yee,
Call me Auntie."

Flo Oy Wong

© 2018 Flo Oy Wong

In November 1933, my mother, a "paper sister," was detained at the Angel Island Immigration Station along with my three older sisters. They stayed for six days for interrogation purposes before leaving to join our father in Oakland, California.

* *Gim Sahn*, Gold Mountain, in Cantonese *thlee yip* (fourth dialect) is another Chinese name for the United States of America.

** *Fah Kee Gwok* in Cantonese *thlee yip* (fourth dialect) means Land of the Flowery Flag, one of several Chinese names for the United States of America.

WHEN WE BADE FAREWELL

When we bade farewell to our village home,
We were in tears because of survival's desperation.
When we arrived in the American territory,
We stared in vain at the vast ocean.
Our ship docked
And we were transferred to a solitary island.
Ten *li* from the city,
My feet stand on this lonely hill.
The *muk uk* is three stories high,
Built as firmly as the Great Wall.
Room after room are but jails,
And the North Gate firmly locked.

離別故鄉，
頻洒窮途之淚。
躬到美域，
徒觀海水之汪洋。
船泊碼頭，
轉撥埃崙之孤島。
離埠十里，
托足孤峯。
三層木屋，
堅如萬里長城。
幾座監牢，
長扃北門管鑰。

This poem inspired movement IV of Huang Ruo's *Angel Island: Oratorio*, a musical composition commissioned by the Del Sol Quartet, which premiered in 2021 on Angel Island. English translations of immigrant poems from Angel Island, used with permission from *Island: Poetry and History of Chinese Immigrants on Angel Island, 1910-1940*.

WOODEN FISH SONG: A MOTHER'S LAMENT

*Dedicated to my paternal
grandmother who disappeared, after
grandfather left for Gold Mountain
with her son, my father, Lim Tai Go.
Rumor had it, since she was very
beautiful that she'd died in a theater
fire, run off with an opera star or
drowned. —G.L.*

Stop looking for yourself
A butterfly doesn't crave attention
It needs no mirror to reflect its beauty
It is free!
Stop looking for yourself
Guy-sen! Untie the rope!
The rope that binds you to
Fears, doubts and desires
Take the sun and moon in your hands
Tomorrow awaits you
Like the flame of a lamp
The days and nights burn away
And the past is smoke
Count the days before you
Immigrants are like crabs in a barrel
Crawling over each other to reach the top
Only to be knocked down again
Obstacles are imposed at every turn
The U.S. border is more impenetrable
Than the Great Wall
Don't reveal Ba-Ba's true names or
His deportation from Island
Leaving you stranded at ten
In the land of *bok guey*, white demons
Your paper uncles send you to
Work on ship crews or dirty kitchens
And migrant fields of the mid-west
With just a sliver of *hom-yih* to
Chew with *oong fon*, cold rice



Photo of grandfather and grandmother
with children. Genny's father Edward
Tai Go Lim, is the young boy, standing
next to his baby half-sister.

My *Tai go*, you were wrenched from my arms
Like a footprint dissolved by the tide
Like the morning mist vanished
You shall not see me again
After our sad farewell
You must never utter my name again
Your Paper Father is not your father
Your Paper Mother is not your mother
And will never call you *bee-doy*
The brackish sea looms like
A mountain of impossible hope
Up, up the mountain, you climb
Criss-crossing the crooked path
Up, up, you struggle, legs cramped, back bent
Yip fow-lah, yip Gah-ji-San-lah
Enter *Die-fow*, enter the Paper Mountain of
Bogus names and counterfeit memories
The bone mountain that buries *gew-hok* alive
The cold mountain that will break you
You imagine me tumbling down the rocks
My black hair tangled like *jai*
Monk's Hair, in fish and algae
A mermaid caught in the ocean's loom
Singing *Muk-yi, Gim-San-Hok* blues
Of loss and paper journeys
Tossed into the weeping sea
Stop looking for me
I am everywhere and nowhere
I am the gypsy moth's wings
Beating against the window pane
The fragrance of night-blooming jasmine
The half-moon at twilight, the whippoorwill
The white cloud floating over *muk-ook*
The barn owl in the eaves at midnight
The first lily bloom of the new year
How-yi ga-siu-sin-far
How yi ga siu sin far
Sin fah law-yi-jai-yaw-di-gar
Stop looking for yourself
The nightingale sings without restraint
The west wind blows without regret

The sun opens her eye to dawn
Unveiling fields of wild poppies
With golden petals beckoning
Spread wide your wings like
The golden eagle on the silver coin
Guy-sen! Untie the rope of yesterdays
Let the dead sleep in their eternal cocoons
Let their spirits migrate the open roads as
Butterflies from *Die Fow* to *Mox-i-gaw!*
Crossing forbidden borders paper sons fear
Unseen fortunes rise and fall
Dense clouds disperse after rain
A *Gim-San-Hok's* home is not
Where he is born, but where he lands
Stop looking for yourself
You are home
Don't look to the past
The moon over *Chel-Kai* is
The same moon over Island
The moon that shined yesterday is
The same moon that shines today
Pluck the stars from the sky
Slip them under your pillow
Heaven is eternal but
Freedom's the life force of all things
From the coldest, darkest winter
The lily flower springs

Genny Lim

© 2023 Genny Lim

Gew-hock- Old guest; early immigrant or sojourner

Muk-ook- Wooden house

Bee-doy- Baby boy

Die-fow Big city; What the immigrants called San Francisco

Mox-i-gaw- Mexico

Muk-yi- Wooden fish songs

Gim-san hock- Gold Mountain guest

Siu-sin-far- A folk melody associated with the narcissus flower.

In the 1800's the bulbs of the flowers were imported to America from China, allowing Chinese immigrants in frontier communities to grow "Chinese sacred lilies," in observance of the New Year.

TWO SISTERS: VOICES FOR MA MA

(Nellie) Tell me Sister, what do you remember?

(Flo) *Ma Ma* says:
Ba Ba is not here.
He returned to America,
Land of the Flowery Flag,
where the streets are
paved with gold.

Ba Ba says:
Yu loy, yu wohng.
Have come, have go.

Tell me Sister, what do you remember?

(Nellie) *Ma Ma* says: *Ai*, we are finally here.
Gim Saan? Mought koy chew ah? What's so stinky?
Girls, follow me. Don't run. Don't act sick.
We must follow the white lady.
Remember, call me Auntie.

(Flo) Remember when *Ma Ma* said...

Thlee tanh how, dead bad head!
Thlee tanh how, dead bad head!
Moon wah do mought ah?
Why you ask questions?
Maw gong, maw gong.
Don't talk, don't talk.
But we children talked.

(Nellie) I remember this.

Ma Ma said: This is truly Gold Mountain.
Ba Ba doesn't lie. The relatives don't lie. They tell true.
Umm gong ai wah!
We will eat and sleep. We will steam chicken, *dim gai*.
Wear new clothes. *Chai yee?*
They have machines, not like at home.
They have automobiles, big homes.
Big schools, such tall buildings.
Never saw so much water in my life.



Photo of Gee Suey Ting,
Nellie & Flo Oy Wong's mother.

- (Flo) Yes. Ma Ma did dream.
- (Nellie) Remember when cousin came to dinner?
We cooked a whole chicken, the freshest *gai lan*!
He smoked *Ba Ba*'s Cuban cigar, drank our *Ng Ga Pei*.
Pulled out a gun!
- Remember when *Ma Ma* flew into the clouds?
Chasing cousin like the cops and robbers on the
afternoon radio.
It didn't matter that *Ba Ba* lay bleeding.
She ran, kicking her silk slippers on the street.
Chasing cousin until she caught him, gun still in hand...*
- (Flo) Yes. *Hai Mee Gwok, yu heck foo*.
In America, eat bitter.
- Ma Ma*, if I lived on a star now,
I would shoot bolts of love to you.
Then you would love your *jook sing* daughters.
- Ba Ba* says:
Yu loy, yu wohng.
- (Nellie) Have come, have go.
- Ma Ma* says:
- (Flo) *Thlin foo*, first bitter —
- (Nellie) *How hem*, then sweet.
- (Flo & Nellie) We are here.

Flo Oy Wong & Nellie Wong

© 2023 Flo Oy Wong & Nellie Wong

* excerpted "From a Heart of Rice Straw" by Nellie Wong, from
Dreams in Harrison Railroad Park, Kelsey St. Press, 1977



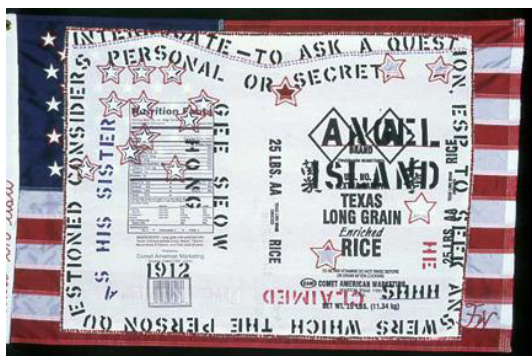
Yew Tin Cheurn,
ancestral village of
Edward K. Wong.
Photo courtesy of
Edward K. Wong

BURIED BENEATH CLAY AND EARTH

Shocking news, truly sad reached my ears.
 We mourn you. When will they wrap your corpse for return?
 You cannot close your eyes.
 On whom are you depending to voice your complaints?
 If you had foresight, you should have regretted coming here.
 Now you will be forever sad and forever resentful.
 Thinking of the village,
 one can only futilely face the Terrace for Gazing Homeward.
 Before you could fulfill your lofty goals,
 you were buried beneath clay and earth.
 I know that even death could not destroy your ambition.

噩耗傳聞實可哀，
 弔君何日裹屍回？
 無能瞑目憑誰訴？
 有識應知悔此來。
 千古含愁千古恨，
 思鄉空對望鄉臺。
 未酬壯志埋壤土，
 知爾雄心死不灰。

This poem inspired movement VI of Huang Ruo's *Angel Island: Oratorio*, a musical composition commissioned by the Del Sol Quartet, which premiered in 2021 on Angel Island. English translations of immigrant poems from Angel Island, used with permission from *Island: Poetry and History of Chinese Immigrants on Angel Island, 1910-1940*.



Flo Oy Wong
Flag : Gee Seow Hong, 1912,
 24" x 36," mixed media
 (rice sack, beads, sequins,
 stenciled text)
 Photo: Bob Hsiang

MY BABA'S VOICE WALKING THROUGH THE ROOMS

My *Baba's* voice, walking through the rooms
 Of our yellowed Victorian house on Harrison Street
 In Oakland, California, during the 1940s,
 Clings to the musty lace curtains filtering light into our lives.
 I, his sixth daughter, go near the flecked windows of our immigrant life,
 Sniffing odors of the torn bark in *Baba's* impoverished village,
 In China known as *Goon Du Haung*.^{*}
 I see my paternal grandmother,
 A dimming candle on a splintered shelf,
 In a faraway adobe house with sooty floors,
 Her parental wisdom extends across the sea,
 Where, later, my *Baba* keenly imparted our family's values,
 Teaching my siblings and me the gift of giving,
 And the gift of accepting.
 In *Fah Kee Gwok*, America.
 Whenever his China-born spirit was thirsty or hungry,
 I, his sixth daughter, listened to his homeland stories,
 Especially when he talked about the beautiful rolling hills
 Resembling the back of an undulating dragon
 Rising above his humble village.
 Now, he is long departed,
 But, still, *Baba's* voice nurtures me
 In the folds of my fermented life in America.

Flo Oy Wong

© 2018 Flo Oy Wong

^{*} *Goon Du Haung* was the name of our ancestral village in China until Communist rule. *Goon Du Haung* is now known as *Loong On*, Happy Dragon, because the nearby hills resemble the back of a dragon.

GETTING TO WORK

Go wake him up, *Ah Nui*,

Ah Chew Yen Gung, Stinky Cigarette Uncle,
is late again! *Bah Bah*'s voice boomed,
but this was a ritual
that fell on my shoulders.

I ran the two blocks
from the Great China Restaurant,
my brown shoes, scuffed but sturdy.
I double-jumped, up the stairs in the apartment building
on Franklin Street, above Hamburger Joe's,
knocked on the door where *Ah Chew Yen Gung* lived
with other bachelors.

The hallway smelled of Camels and Lucky Strikes, favorites
of Chinese men, the *thlon doy*,
some who left their wives and babies
in the home villages in Hoisan,
to find work.

"*Ah Chell Gung ah*,
Ah Chell Gung ah!"

It would have been impolite to refer to him upfront as Stinky Cigarette Uncle
as he was my elder.

I hammered with my right fist
on the door with peeling blue paint.

"*Fahn gung lah!*" Get to work!

I said with all the authority
of a 15-year-old, my heart pounding.

Soon *Ah Chell Gung* lumbered out.

His slight body bent, his buggy eyes glassy,
Looking as if he had barely slept.

Ah Chell Gung had a stubble of beard flecked
with gray, his hair slicked back with pomade.

I ran ahead of him, back
to the Great China, donned my apron
and began to slice tomatoes for lunch.

Ah Chell Gung slinked to the back of the restaurant,
 put on his baker's hat and crisp, white baker's jacket.
 His fingers worked magic
 as he mixed the dough, cracking
 eggs and pouring milk into the bowl.
 From the oven, the yellow cake's fragrance
 filled my nostrils and when I finished making
 lettuce salads topped with tomato slices, I watched
Ah Chell Gung light up a Lucky Strike, letting
 the cigarette dangle
 out of his mouth.

Ah Bock Gung, the head cook,
 was finishing up the braised beef stew
 and a big pan of baked spaghetti.

Ah Law Wong Bok, the dishwasher,
 with his middle finger missing
 from his right hand, was piling up white plates
 with green rims onto the counter.

Ah Chell Gung let his Lucky's dangle.
 I held my breath. Oh, no,
 ashes will decorate the cake!
 But *Ah Chell Gung*, with his eyes focused,
 his hands steady,
 spread the fresh whipped cream,
 crowning the cake filled with *heng dell*,
 fragrant bananas reminding him of home.

Nellie Wong

© 2012 Nellie Wong

Ai Joong Wah,
 Great China Restaurant
 Photo by Flo Oy Wong.

The Gee Wong family ran the
 restaurant at 723 Webster
 Street in Oakland Chinatown,
 from 1943 to 1961.

This photo of her mother
 and a cousin visiting from
 Canada, taken with a
 Brownie camera given to Flo
 by a customer, is among the
 collection of photographs
 that served as the foundation
 of Flo's *Oakland Chinatown*
Series (1983-91).





#StopAAPIHate Rally Chalk Drawings,
Portsmouth Square, 2021.

PORTSMOUTH SQUARE

They live their lives here
The old men
This is their living room
Every afternoon they sit
On park benches
Pandemic or no pandemic
Like weathered statuary
Reading the Chinese Times
Playing Chinese checkers
Or Five-hand Poker for
nickels and dimes
in *thlee-yip*
their village tongue
They are the *gew-hok*
Sojourners, whose eyes
are frothy oceans
sucked dry by time
Whose straw limbs
where once spun
sinewy muscles that sweated
in kitchens, culled crops
fished Bay shrimp and bass
cleaned toilets, swabbed floors
roasted ducks, washed laundry
and waited tables
are flecked with age

They possess the grass
with the pigeons and the
invisible children
Who don't look like them
or call them *Gung-Gung*
Koy-na juk sing do m'hew
gong yit-ga-guey!
Underneath the Bridge
that span the distance
and sum total of their lives
from the *Mook Ook*
on Angel Island to the
dead silence of a
Lock-down that can't
keep their memories
from the burning hope
that *Gim-San*
Gold Mountain was
the right and only choice
for freedom

Genny Lim
© 2021 by Genny Lim



1944 photo of the Gee Wong family. Left to right (standing) Nellie Wong, Gee Li Keng, Gee Li Hong, Henry Lew (spouse of Li Hong), Gee Lai Wah, Flo Oy Wong (in front of Lai Wah), and Leslie Wong. Seated are Gee Suey Ting, William Gee Wong, and Gee Seow Hong.



1947 photo of the Lim family. Left to right: Cecilia, Mom (Lin Sun Lim) holding baby Genny, Betty, Ronald, father (Edward Lim), and Doreen Lim.

Haw Meong Suey / Good Life's Water

Haw Meong Suey, Ah Nui
Haw Meong Suey
U. S. born, aw Uk Lun,
Hong Ngim Fow
Oakland Chinatown
Haw Meong Suey
Ah Ma, Ah Ba
Ei fahn ngoi heck,
Fed me rice
Ei uk ngoi gee, ei som ngoi jeck
Gave me shelter, clothes to wear
Haw Meng Suey
Nei gow ngoi kwai nui, kwai nui
You taught me bad girl, bad girl
Nei gow ngoi haw nui, haw nui
You taught me good girl, good girl
Ngoi koi see bock thlai how faht
Now I am full of white hair
Ngoi koi see bong jaw sai gai nah
gung ngin
I fight for working people
in this world
Thank you, Mom, Pop
Haw meong suey, haw meong suey.

Haw Meong Suey: It's Really TRUE
Mama, gill see ngnoy slai goy nin see,
Mama, long ago when I was young,
Nay wah ngnoy haw meong suey.
You said that I carry good life's water.
Coy see ngnoy bot sip thlom thleuy,
Now that I am eighty three years old,
Ngnoy op nay, jin guh hai wah.
I answer you, it's really TRUE.
Haw Meong Suey, jin guh hai wah.
Good life's water, it's really TRUE.
Haw Meong Suey, Haw Meong Suey,
Good life's water, good life's water,
Jin guh hai wah, jin guh hai wa.
It's really TRUE, it's really TRUE.



Ho Meng-Suey

Ho Meng-Suey

I said, "Mom, Why don't you learn English?"

All the other kids' parents take ESL classes."

Ma said, "Hmph! If you want to talk to me,
you can talk to me in my language!"

Thlay-yip wah! Nay mawt do m'gay'ok thlai!

Ho meng-suey

Thay-yip wah, Hoisan-paw

The accent's gotta swing like
the tail of the ox pulling its cart
along the Pearl River Delta

Like Ishi, frozen in time
they say you never left China

Ho meng-suey

Hoisan-wah

Language is the boat that delivers me from the homeland

I've never set foot on to the country I call home

Mei-guo, the beautiful country that never was

Your first language is the language of your dreams

But like the sun that will slowly lose its heat and light

and get smaller and smaller to the size of a star one day

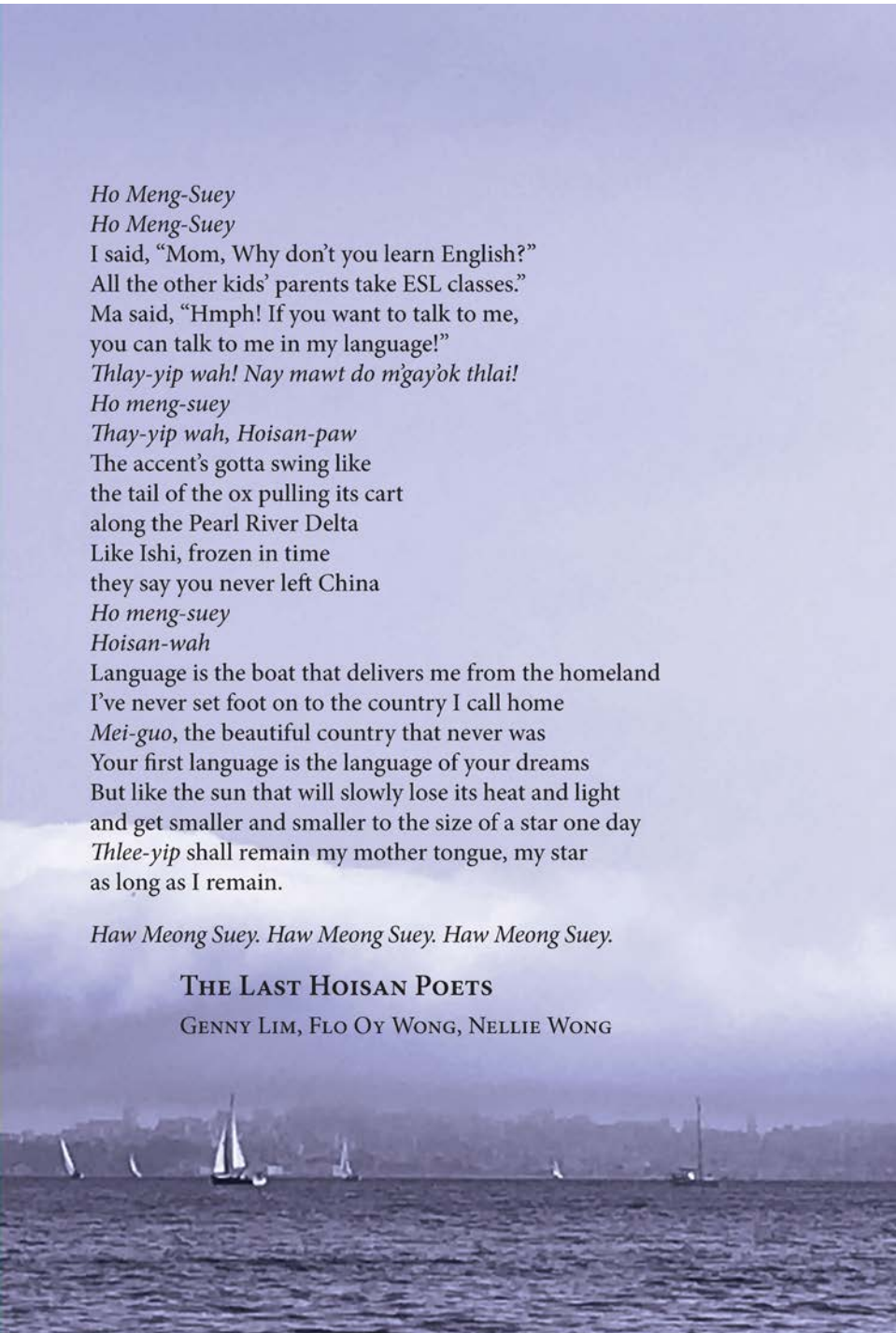
Thlee-yip shall remain my mother tongue, my star

as long as I remain.

Haw Meong Suey. Haw Meong Suey. Haw Meong Suey.

THE LAST HOISAN POETS

GENNY LIM, FLO OY WONG, NELLIE WONG





Dreams of Flight on Angel Island,
2019. Photo: Andi Wong

"*The Journey*" is the concluding poem from *Within These Walls*, performed by Lenora Lee Dance. The work premiered at the US Immigration Station at Angel Island State Park, on May 4-19, 2017.

In 2019, the sequel, *Dreams of Flight* premiered along with a re-staging of *Within These Walls*, for three weekends at the U.S. Immigration Station, Angel Island State Park, from May 4 –19, 2019.

In 2023, UC Berkeley student performers will present *Within These Walls*, an integrated, multi-media contemporary dance project featuring original recorded music, poetry, and video projection, performed by the Berkeley Dance Project, directed by SanSan Kwan.

THE JOURNEY

Though we cannot be together at all times
 May the blessings of our ancestors protect us
 Though we cannot change the path of
 The sun or the moon
 May we persevere in this place of
 Wind and darkness, like the cuckoo
 Who returns from far off lands
 To sip the fruit of liberation
 How joyful it would be if I could see
 The faces of my children, radiant as stars!
 The pursuit of freedom is filled with hardship
 To persevere through life is a struggle
 Sorrow is the immigrant's fate
 His gift to the fellow beings who come after
 Is the truth of freedom, that powerful
 Illumination that bright, clear light that
 Cuts through the ignorance of
 Hatred, fear and injustice
 The spirit of hope and determination—
 That is the immigrant's sword to
 Dispel the darkness of the world—
 The spirit of change and transformation
 That is the immigrant's dream
 To end man's inhumanity to man
 With tolerance and compassion
 With equality, peace and love
 The ultimate revolution

Genny Lim

© 2017 by Genny Lim



The Last Hoisan Poets: Nellie Wong, Flo Oy Wong, and Genny Lim. Photo: Gary Sexton

THE LAST HOISAN POETS — Genny Lim, Nellie Wong, and Flo Oy Wong — trace their roots to China's Hoisan villages, home of the Hoisan-wa (a.k.a. Toisanese/Taishanese) Chinese dialect. They conduct special poetry readings in English and Hoisan-wa, to pay homage to their mother language which is at risk of fading from collective memory.

<https://thelasthoisanpoets.ddns.net/>

Genny Lim is the recipient of two lifetime achievement literary awards from PEN Oakland and the city of Berkeley. She has also served as San Francisco Jazz Poet Laureate and former SF Arts Commissioner. Lim's award-winning play, *Paper Angels*, the first Asian American play to air on PBS's *American Playhouse* in 1985, has been performed throughout the U.S., Canada and China. She is author of five poetry collections, *Winter Place*, *Child of War*, *Paper Gods and Rebels*, *KRA!*, *La Morte Del Tempo*, and co-author, with the late Him Mark Lai and Judy Yung, of *Island: Poetry and History of Chinese Immigrants on Angel Island*, winner of the American Book Award in 1980. Lim has worked with past Jazz legends, such as Max Roach and long-time collaborators, Jon Jang, John Santos, Francis Wong and Anthony Brown. She is a member of *The Last Hoisan Poets*, who recently collaborated with Del Sol Quartet in the *United States of Asian America Festival 2022*.

Flo Oy Wong, co-founder of the San Francisco-based Asian American Women Artists Association (AAWAA), is an artist/poet/educator. A recipient of three National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) awards, she was a visiting artist at various colleges and universities. Articles about her art are published

in multiple publications. Growing up in Oakland Chinatown, she spoke her family's ancestral dialect, Hoisan-wa. In the year 2000, Kearny Street Workshop presented Flo Oy Wong's "*made in usa: Angel Island Shhh*" solo exhibit, which explored the identity secrets of Chinese immigrants detained and interrogated in the United States. In 2018, Flo published her art and poetry book, *Dreaming of Glistening Pomelos* (Amazon), inspired by her childhood. Contemporary Asian Theater Scene (CATS) presented Flo with their 2022 Image Hero Award. Now, a member of *The Last Hoisan Poets*, she frequently reads with sister poets Genny Lim and Nellie Wong.

Nellie Wong has published four books: *Dreams in Harrison Railroad Park*, *The Death of Long Steam Lady*, *Stolen Moments* and *Breakfast Lunch Dinner*. Her poems and essays appear in numerous journals and anthologies, including *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings By Radical Women of Color*, the foundational text of women of color feminism edited by Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa. Among her many recognitions, excerpts from two poems have been permanently installed at public sites at the San Francisco Municipal Railway and a building at Oakland High School is named after her. She's co-featured in the documentary film, *Mitsuye and Nellie Asian American Poets*. A poem of hers was nominated for the Pushcart Prize. She's traveled to China in the First American Women Writers Tour with Alice Walker, Tillie Olsen and Paule Marshall, among others. She's taught poetry writing at Mills College and in Women Studies at the University of Minnesota. Nellie is the recipient of the 2022 PEN Oakland/Reginald Lockett Lifetime Achievement Award.



Photo: AFW Productions

Fascinated by the feedback loop between social change, technology, and artistic innovation, the San Francisco-based **Del Sol Quartet** is a leading force in 21st-century chamber music. They believe that live music can, and should, happen anywhere — whether introducing Ben Johnston's microtonal Americana at the Library of Congress or in a canyon cave, taking Aeryn Santillan's gun-

violence memorial to the streets of the Mission District, or collaborating with Huang Ruo and the anonymous Chinese poets who carved their words into the walls of the Angel Island Immigration Station. Since 1992, Del Sol has commissioned and premiered thousands of new works.

<https://www.delsolquartet.com/>

Victor Yan is a reader of the Three Hundred Tang Poems, classic works which assist his investigation of the human condition that is reflected in the poems.

Katie Quan of REALSOUL makes the past present and accessible through ready-made visual stories and lesson guides for educators. They work with community artists and historians to weave Asian American and other BIPOC experiences together in classrooms. Our work aims to remind people that we do not stand alone, but rather, stand on the shoulders of many ancestors. With each story we tell, we hope that students and teachers alike may find a safe space knowing that they are rooted in history and in themselves.

<https://realsoul.us>

The Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation is the primary nonprofit partner working with California State Parks to preserve and promote the former US Immigration Station at Angel Island. From 1910 to 1940, over 500,000 immigrants from 80 different countries — mostly Asian and Pacific Island countries — were processed or detained there. For all immigrants, descendants, and families, Angel Island is a living landmark that symbolizes diverse experiences of detention, racism, and exclusion. The Foundation protects the historic site, stewards its histories and stories, promotes learning, and celebrates the new beginnings and immigrant contributions that define the strength of the United States. The Foundation inspires all to envision a more equitable and inclusive future; one that embodies how immigration makes nations better. <https://www.aiisf.org>

A Year on Angel Island is a yearlong series of performances, exhibitions, public lectures, courses, and creative projects at UC Berkeley. The series uses the Angel Island Immigration Station, which was built to enforce U.S. immigrant law, including the Chinese Exclusion Act, as an observatory from which to consider themes of migration, incarceration, othering—and belonging. Upcoming events include

--Jan. 26 historian Erika Lee

--Feb. 21 The Last Hoisan Poets

--Feb. 23-26 Lenora Lee's dance piece Within These Walls.

For a full list of speakers and performances visit futurehistories.berkeley.edu/angel-island.

- 11 am – 3 pm, Family art making activity with the Last Hoisan Poets, Kimball Education Gallery
- 11 am – 3 pm, History of Angel Island exhibition pop-up and Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation resource table, Wilsey Court.

NATIONAL ANGEL ISLAND DAY 2023 @ THE DE YOUNG MUSEUM

Echoes from Angel Island 天使島

Saturday, January 21, 2023, 12:30pm to 1:30pm

Koret Auditorium, de Young Museum

THE LAST HOISAN POETS

Genny Lim, Flo Oy Wong, Nellie Wong

with Cantonese poetry readings by Victor Yan

DEL SOL QUARTET

Sam Weiser, violin

Benjamin Kreith, violin

Charlton Lee, viola

Kathryn Bates, cello

Pre-Show Video:

Light-Saraf Films: *Mitsuye and Nellie: Asian American Poets* (1981)

American Playhouse: Genny Lim's *Paper Angels* (1985)

PBS NewsHour: Flo Oy Wong's *made in usa: Angel Island Shhh* (2000)

A Journey Through Angel Island by Felicia Lowe (2022)

Andi Wong, Project Coordinator

Christopher Wong, Videographer

"Echoes from Angel Island" Exhibit in Wilsey Court
made possible with support from **North East Medical Services**.

Highlighting works by

Him Mark Lai & Judy Yung, Del Sol Quartet, Lenora Lee Dance,
Lenore Chinn, Nancy Hom, Bob Hsiang, Crystal Huie, Jon Jang, Felicia Lowe,
Mark Shigenaga, Olivia Ting, Leland Wong, William Wong, and others.

Commemorative zine by Katie Quan, REALSOUL

Presented, in partnership, by

Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation

Ed Tepporn & Danielle Wetmore

UC Berkeley Future Histories Lab

Susan Moffat & Lisa Wymore

de Young Museum

Devin Malone, Maria Egoavil, Rosario Sotelo, Public Programs
Emily Jennings, Anu Valaas, Hitoshi Shigeta, Education Department